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THE INFLUENCE OF SLANG ON THE PERCEPTION OF LYRICS IN MODERN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE SONGS

In contemporary popular music, slang has become a central linguistic feature that shapes how audiences interpret and emotionally experience song lyrics. As music functions as a global form of communication, it reflects ongoing linguistic change, particularly the expansion of informal, digital, and youth-driven varieties of English. Recent research highlights that slang is no longer peripheral but an integral part of youth identity construction and online interaction (Tagliamonte, 2023, 112–118). Moreover, the rapid turnover of slang – where expressions can emerge, spread, and become obsolete within months – creates a sense of temporal belonging, allowing listeners to feel connected to the present moment. This temporal marker distinguishes contemporary lyrics from those of previous decades, reinforcing the idea that music serves as a living archive of linguistic innovation.

Slang in song lyrics primarily contributes to authenticity and interpersonal closeness between artists and listeners. Linguists emphasize that informal language allows performers to create a sense of “real speech,” making lyrics feel more personal and emotionally accessible. This effect is especially strong in Generation Z communication, where relatability and conversational tone are highly valued (Buchstaller, 2022, 85–90). However, authenticity in slang usage is not automatic; audiences are increasingly skilled at detecting inauthentic or forced slang, often termed “corporate slang” or “brand speak.” When older artists or mainstream pop productions adopt youth slang without cultural grounding, listeners may perceive the lyrics as manipulative or out-of-touch, a phenomenon that has been documented in the reception

of several commercially successful yet critically mocked songs in the early 2020s. Thus, the effective use of slang depends not only on its inclusion but on its congruence with the artist's perceived identity and social position.

A clear example is Harry Styles' song *As It Was* (2022). The lyrical structure relies on repetition and conversational phrasing, which enhances emotional immediacy. The informal reduction *holdin' me back* reflects natural spoken English rather than formal written language. This stylistic choice aligns with findings in contemporary pop discourse analysis, which show that simplicity and speech-like rhythm increase audience engagement and perceived sincerity (Thornborrow, 2023, 54–58). Additionally, Styles employs the slang adjective *soft* not merely as a descriptor but as a generational signal of emotional vulnerability, a usage that has gained traction in digital subcultures discussing masculinity and mental health. This layered meaning would be lost if the listener approached the lyric with a purely denotative interpretation, underscoring how slang functions as a carrier of shared cultural knowledge.

In contrast, slang in music can also serve as a tool for irony and identity performance. Billie Eilish's *Bad Guy* (2019) demonstrates how informal expressions and playful linguistic choices construct a distinctive artistic persona. Scholars argue that youth-oriented slang in digital culture often functions as a form of performative identity, where meaning is shaped by attitude rather than literal interpretation (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2022, 201–206). Eilish's use of the boast-framed phrase *I'm the bad guy* – delivered with exaggerated nonchalance – deliberately subverts the traditional hip-hop trope of antagonism, producing irony that resonates with listeners familiar with both the original convention and its deconstruction. This ironic distance is a hallmark of post-millennial lyricism, where sincerity and playfulness coexist, and slang provides the flexible register needed to navigate that tension.

Digital platforms such as TikTok have significantly accelerated the spread and normalization of slang in music. Research shows that TikTok plays a key role in transforming short lyrical fragments into viral cultural units, often reinforcing the

popularity of songs through repetition and meme culture (Zulli & Zulli, 2023, 2–5). This creates a feedback loop in which slang spreads from online communities into mainstream music and back again. Importantly, the platform's algorithm prioritizes user-generated reinterpretations of songs, such as lip-syncs, parodies, and dance challenges, which frequently isolate slang-rich lines from their original context. When a phrase like *that's that me espresso* (Sabrina Carpenter, 2024) goes viral, its meaning multiplies beyond the songwriter's intention, turning slang into a participatory meme. This process challenges traditional models of lyric interpretation, where the author's intent once held priority; instead, meaning emerges collectively through thousands of micro-appropriations.

Furthermore, the global spread of English-language music means that slang often reaches non-native speakers who may struggle with nuanced interpretation. For international audiences, slang can either enhance engagement – by offering a gateway to immersive, authentic language use – or create barriers, leading to misinterpretation or alienation. Pedagogical studies suggest that listening to slang-rich lyrics with guided analysis improves advanced learners' sociolinguistic competence, yet many casual listeners simply absorb slang as opaque but aesthetically pleasing sound patterns. This duality complicates the claim that slang universally increases emotional accessibility; its effect depends heavily on the listener's prior exposure to informal English and digital subcultures.

Overall, slang transforms song lyrics from fixed artistic texts into dynamic and socially embedded communication. It strengthens emotional engagement, supports identity expression, and integrates music into digital culture. For philology and translation studies, understanding slang is essential, as it reflects the ongoing evolution of global English in youth communication. Translating such lyrics poses particular challenges: a direct equivalent may lose ironic shading, while a too-creative adaptation may misrepresent the original's social stance. Future research should examine how

machine translation tools handle slang in musical contexts and how cross-cultural audiences negotiate the tension between lyrical opacity and artistic allure.

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LINGUOCULTUROLOGICAL ASPECTS OF RENDERING ENGLISH CORPORATE TERMINOLOGY IN UKRAINIAN TRANSLATION

In the context of globalization, corporate discourse has become one of the key instruments of professional intercultural communication. For representatives of creative industries – including media, design, advertising, IT, tourism, and digital platforms – proficiency in English economic terminology is an essential prerequisite for effective professional interaction. Corporate discourse functions as a complex system of professional communication reflecting economic processes, institutional values, and standards of the modern business environment (Popovych, Bialyk, 2020).

The relevance of the research is determined by the growing need for high-quality translation of corporate documentation in Ukraine under conditions of active integration into the international economic and educational space. Misinterpretation of economic